

where he remained employed until 1979 when he retired. After retiring, he moved to West Branch, Michigan where he resides today.

Mr. Richardson has continued to be involved in numerous civic activities of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 3775, and previously served as the post's commander. It is for his involvement in the community that Mr. Richardson has been bestowed with this award—the highest honor the Ogemaw County Veterans Alliance can bestow upon a fellow veteran.

Gerald Richardson is a man who understands commitment and exemplifies the values of service and responsibility toward others. He stands as an example of what it means to be a true American hero, embodying traits of honor, courage and humility.

Madam Speaker, Gerald Richardson has served his country with bravery and dignity, and has continued to draw on these traits in service to Ogemaw County. He is an individual who has been recognized by his community and his fellow veterans as a leader and a model citizen. With that in mind Madam Speaker, I ask that you, and all of my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives, join me in saluting Gerald Richardson for his lifetime of service and in congratulating him on being awarded Ogemaw County Veteran of the Year.

CELEBRATE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF HISPANIC AMERICANS TO THE UNITED STATES

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 4, 2009

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 783, "Recognizing Hispanic Heritage Month," and celebrating the vast contributions of Hispanic-Americans to the strength and culture of the United States.

Through the centuries, millions of Hispanic men and women have traveled to the United States looking for the American dream and a better future for their families. They are today spread far and wide across the 50 States. Their arrival resulted in a remarkable mixture of Hispanic culture, traditions, music, food, and language with the American way of life. The Census Bureau reports that Hispanic Americans are the largest ethnic minority in our Nation today, representing 15 percent of the total population.

Hispanic Americans have created their own companies and businesses and are an integral part of the American workforce that keeps our economy moving forward. There are Hispanic Americans serving in the Senate and House of Representatives, but we must do more to increase these numbers and diversify Capitol Hill offices with better Hispanic representation. This year, Sonia Sotomayor, a Bronx native of Puerto Rican descent, became the first Latina to sit on the Supreme Court after being nominated by President Obama. Finally, we must pay respects to the over one million Hispanic veterans who have fought valiantly to defend this nation.

On both big and small scales, Hispanic Americans have left their mark, their heritage, and their contributions on this great country. Their music is heard through voices like Celia

Cruz, Marc Anthony, and Tito Puente. Their food is widely available in menus across the country. Their Spanish language we have grown accustomed to hearing, understanding, and loving.

Hispanic American heritage is culture, life and beauty. I urge all my colleagues to extend their support to celebrate a cultural heritage and contribution that makes us the country we are.

NATIONAL FIREFIGHTERS MEMORIAL DAY

SPEECH OF

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 28, 2009

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Resolution 729, a resolution honoring and celebrating this nation's firefighters with a "National Firefighters' Memorial Day." In today's economic climate, we cannot forget the irreplaceable services that firefighters and first responders perform in our communities, often receiving as compensation only the personal fulfillment of making a difference.

Take, for example, the volunteer fire department of Portland, Connecticut, a small town in the southern part of my district. The fire department in Portland was established in 1884 when a group of twenty-five members of the community recognized that a bucket brigade was insufficient to fight the blazes that were devastating their downtown. They decided they could not stand by idly while friends and neighbors lost their homes and businesses. Today, the Portland volunteer fire department boasts sixty members, and the original firehouse still stands on Portland's Main Street, a symbol of the central role that our first responders play in our communities.

The technology of firefighting has evolved significantly since the early days of the Portland volunteer fire department. I am proud to say that the fire department in Hartford is one of less than fifty departments, out of over 33,000 across the country, to earn the highest possible ranking for fire protection. This honor is no doubt a result of Hartford's position on the cutting edge of first responder technology. Hartford's fire department has been a trailblazer in using GIS mapping and GPS technology to make every first responder aware of hydrant locations, water main diameters, engine locations, and building footprints across the city, all to better serve Connecticut's capital city.

Firefighters in Connecticut's First District also serve the thousands of people who use Bradley Airport each day. The Connecticut Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, established in 1975, is located in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, near the airport. Its facilities, with classrooms, a dive rescue training pool, burn structures, a training yard, and airplane and tanker props for passenger extrication drills, provide a state-of-the-art campus to train and coordinate first responder efforts across the state. It is because of Connecticut's dedication to providing resources and support to its firefighters that we boast some of the best in the nation.

Connecticut's first district hosts thirty-seven fire houses, including Hartford's. Twenty-seven

of these, including Portland's, are completely volunteer operations. Even when the men and women who make up these fire houses aren't selflessly protecting the lives of their friends and neighbors, you can see them out in their communities. They are working day jobs, teaching young people and engendering their passion for fire safety through school visits and Explorer programs, and participating in carnivals, spaghetti suppers, and fundraisers to pay for the equipment and training they need to stay at the top of their profession. The services that firefighters and first responders provide are priceless. The very least we can do is honor our first responders with a "National Firefighters' Memorial Day," and recognize the crucial role they play in promoting our safety, security, and well-being.

HEALTH CARE

HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 4, 2009

Mr. BACA. Madam Speaker, as Members of Congress, it is our duty to pass real health care reform this year.

Perhaps no state is in greater need of this reform than my home state of California.

Two hundred seventeen thousand people in my Congressional District go everyday without reform.

And for California as a whole—we have 13 million uninsured residents!

The people of California, and people across the United States need health care reform that:

Ends discrimination based on pre-existing conditions!

Ends dropped healthcare coverage because you get sick!

Ends co-pays for preventative care!

And ends skyrocketing costs for individuals and families!

The Republican alternative does none of these things!

It simply keeps the status quo! It costs more! And does nothing!

The 217,000 people living in my District without insurance cannot afford inaction any longer!

The 13 million people in California without insurance cannot live with the status quo!

The 15 hundred families in my District who went bankrupt because of health costs cannot afford the status quo!

Now is our opportunity to make history—and to move America forward!

We must not be short-sighted and focus only on politics and polls.

As we work for health care reform, I also urge my colleagues to pass a bill that does not include costly and discriminatory verification requirements like the SAVE requirements.

Our Nation cannot afford either the humanitarian or the fiscal costs of a health care immigration verification process.

As a Christian—my faith teaches me that we must love our fellow man, and care for them as if they were our brother or sister.

If a sick person is at the doctor's or the hospital—they need help!

They do not have time to wait for a lengthy background check to determine their citizenship status.

Can you imagine the medical errors we will have if we have to run an immigration status check every time someone who looks different needs medical care!

This can lead to a dangerous precedent of racial profiling! People may be denied life-saving care simply because of how they look!

From a fiscal perspective—numerous studies have shown us that immigration screenings cost our nation much more in tax dollars than they actually save.

SAVE requirements would become unfunded mandates that add to the administrative cost burden of our States!

In my home State of California—Los Angeles County spent \$28 million in 2008 to implement tougher verification standards on the Medi-Cal program!

I repeat—\$28 million!!

And how many undocumented immigrants did this \$28 million help to catch actually using Medi-Cal benefits? Zero!!!

Is this a cost-effective practice?! Or is this a burden on county governments?!

A mandatory verification requirement in this health bill would only add to the current cost burden of emergency rooms!

We should be working on policies that encourage people to go to clinics, where they can receive proper preventative and routine care.

SAVE electronic verification would push more and more people into the emergency room—where all of us will be left to pick up the tab!

Additional SAVE Program Verification also hinders access for the general public to health care.

This has certainly been the case since states have been required to verify legal status for Medicaid.

According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities—anywhere from 3 million to 5 million U.S. citizens have lost Medicaid coverage because they lacked the necessary paperwork (birth certificate or passport) to prove their citizenship.

By introducing mandatory electronic verification procedures—we are creating additional hurdles for Americans to access the care they need!

And what would be the cost in new liability suits?!

And think of our current situation with H1N1. Families need access to care immediately—to stop the spread of further outbreaks!

This would be chaos! It would burden our entire healthcare system with a costly and ineffective unfunded mandate.

From both a humanitarian and a fiscal point of view—we cannot afford mandatory electronic verification.

I am pleased the manager's amendment to this legislation does not include mandatory verification for people looking to access the health care exchange.

I urge my colleagues to remain vigilant on this issue—and work to stop any mandatory electronic verification requirements.

I am also pleased the larger bill includes the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.

As a Member of the House Native American Caucus and the Natural Resources Committee—I have been a strong supporter of ending the health disparities that exist on our reservations.

I will close my statement by again stressing the importance of this historic moment!

We passed Social Security in 1935. We passed Medicare in 1965.

I urge my colleagues to stand with the American people and pass legislation in 2009

that will make quality, affordable health care a right for all Americans!

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 4, 2009

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker, due to illness, I was unable to be present in the Capitol for votes on Tuesday, November 3, 2009.

However, had I been present, I would have voted “yea” on H.R. 3949, Veterans’ Small Business Assistance and Servicemembers Protection Act of 2009; “yea” on H. Res. 398, Recognizing the 60th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift’s success; “yea” on H. Res. 866, Expressing support for designation of a National Veterans History Project Week to encourage public participation in a nationwide project that collects and preserves the stories of the men and women who served our Nation in times of war and conflict; yea on H. Res. 867, Calling on the President and the Secretary of State to oppose unequivocally any endorsement or further consideration of the “Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict” in multilateral for a; “yea” on H.R. 3157, To name the Department of Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic in Alexandria, Minnesota, as the “Max J. Beilke Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic”; and “yea” on H. Res. 736, To name the Department of Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic in Alexandria, Minnesota, as the “Max J. Beilke Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic.”